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Promotion and protection of the rights of children

Human rights questions: Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

Letter dated 20 May 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that the Fifth Ministerial Meeting of the Human Security Network was held in Graz, Austria, from 8 to 10 May 2003, under the chairmanship of the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria, Benita Ferrero-Waldner.

The Human Security Network, an interregional group of countries comprising Austria, Canada, Chile, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Switzerland, Thailand and South Africa, as an observer, focused its discussions on the two priority issues designated by the Austrian Chairperson: human rights education and children affected by armed conflict. On these issues, the Network adopted the following four documents:

- The Graz Declaration on Principles of Human Rights Education and Human Security
- Understanding Human Rights — a Manual on Human Rights Education
- Bridging the Gap — a Support Strategy for Children Affected by Armed Conflict
- A Child Rights Training Curriculum — Child Protection, Monitoring and Rehabilitation.

Furthermore, a compendium of international standards relevant to the issue of children affected by armed conflict was produced in collaboration with your Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and presented at the Meeting.

I take pleasure in transmitting to you the above-mentioned documents that were elaborated by the Network with the support of more than 50 renowned international experts. I am confident that the manual, Understanding Human Rights,

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and the Child Rights Training Curriculum will especially be of practical value to the United Nations, particularly in its ongoing endeavours to integrate human rights into all relevant programmes and activities of the United Nations system. Further information on these documents can be found on the web site of the Austrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs as of June 2003 (www.bmaa.gv.at/index.html.en).

Besides the two priority themes, the Network discussed, inter alia, the issues of small arms and light weapons, landmines, preparations for the 2003 Conference of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, HIV/AIDS as well as poverty and people-centred development. The Meeting also discussed the humanitarian situation in Iraq, including an Austrian-Slovenian-Jordanian project to assist war traumatized children and child victims. At the end of the Meeting, the chairmanship of the Network for the period 2003-2004 was assumed by Mali.

I should be grateful if you would arrange for the present letter to be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 105 and 109 (b).

(*Signed*) Gerhard **Pfanzelter**
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations